DECEMBER 1997

Louisiana
COAST LINES

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Coastal Management Division Issues Two New General Permits

The Coastal Management Division has recently proposed the implementation of two new General Permits, Coastal Use Permit GP-17 and GP-18.

Recent acquisition of a small dredge by the Coastal Restoration Division, used to conduct small scale restoration projects, motivated the Coastal Management Division to devise the GP-17. Although GP-17 was designed primarily for the activities of the small dredge project by the Coastal Restoration Division, there are allowances for its application to restoration projects by other agencies, both governmental and private. GP-17 will not authorize marsh management plans or authorize activities that will create fastlands.

The primary purpose of GP-18 is to allow an individual property owner to prepare his property for a private residence. GP-18 will cover almost all activities involved in converting a lot into a typical homesite without the full Coastal Use Permit process being activated. GP-18 is designed to authorize single lot preparation and will not apply to commercial or multi-site developers. However, GP-18 may apply to individual property owners who are constructing their residence in a subdivision.

Coastal Use General Permits afford the Coastal Management Division an opportunity to survey a particular type of activity and develop technical standards that can be applied to all activities of that type. This has proven especially effective in oil and gas activities, which comprise the majority of Coastal Use Permit applications submitted. Coastal Use General Permits 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, and 16 apply only to oil and gas activities and contain very precise technical standards for widths, depths, and lengths of slips, channels, canals, board roads, and ring levees. Applications for activities which fit one of the general permits but not the technical specifications are processed as a full Coastal Use Permits. In addition, the applicant must provide adequate justification in order to exceed the technical specifications. These technical standards were developed with extensive input from the oil and gas industry and other experts contracted by the

Cont. on page 2

Coastal Management Division. If feasible an applicant will reduce the scope of his proposal in order to meet the standards established by the general permit prior to submittal of a permit application.

The first four general permits issued, GP-1, 2, 3, and 4 have expired and activities previously authorized by those general permits are included in GP-5, 6, 7, and 10. GP-8 authorizes Christmas Tree Projects and was re-issued in October. GP-9, the most infrequently utilized general permit, authorizes the construction of small boat slips and bulkheads, activities that will be covered by GP-18 if it is issued. GP-9 will probably not be re-issued when it expires in September 1998. GP-11 authorizes mitigation activities, when the mitigation is for a permitted activity. GP-13 authorizes maintenance dredging for drainage and sediment diversion, within carefully devised parameters. GP-14 authorizes the utility activities and was drafted with considerable input from utility companies. GP-15 authorizes maintenance dredging of existing channels and slips utilized for private and commercial activities.

Prior to implementing a general permit, Coastal Management Division personnel review the frequency with which applications for a particular activity are submitted. CMD also reviews how closely the activities are related and the activity type must meet the Coastal Use Guidelines. When the decision is made to pursue the development of a general permit, a draft document is prepared and circulated among the user groups and commenting agencies for a preliminary review. When the preliminary comments are collected and addressed in the draft general permit, a public notice (which includes all of the text of the general permit) is issued. When the comments from the public notice are collected, a final draft of the general permit is prepared, unless there are objections that can not be resolved. Unless substantial changes are required because of comments received, the general permit is then issued.

Coastal Management Division General Permits currently in use:

GP-6 Installation of Flow-lines
Installation of flowlines for oil and gas activities.

GP-7 Construction and Maintenance of Parallel Slips
Construction and maintenance of parallel slip use for oil and gas activities.

GP-8 Christmas Tree Projects
Construction of sediment fences. Re-issued October 22, 1997.

GP-9 Boat slips in Man Made Canals
Construction of small private boat slips and bulkheads on private canals. Issued September 1, 1993.

GP-10 Maintenance Dredging of Oil and Gas Canals and Slips
Maintenance dredging of channels, canals, and slips that are used for oil and gas activities. Issued November 1, 1993.

GP-11 Mitigation Projects for Permitted Activities
Mitigation projects that are being conducted as mitigation for activities for which Coastal Use Permits have been obtained. Issued September 19, 1995.

GP-12 Field Wide Maintenance Dredging for Oil and Gas Canals and Slips.

Cont. on page 3

Maintenance of existing channels, canals, and slips that are used for access to oil, gas, and salt water disposal wells and production facilities within the Coastal Zone of Louisiana. Issued January 28, 1997.

GP-13 Maintenance Dredging of Existing canals utilized for Management of Surface Water Flow.

Maintenance dredging of existing channels, canals, and ditches that are utilized for the management of surface water flow. Issued January 28, 1997.

GP-14 Installation and Maintenance of Utility Facilities

Installation, maintenance, and repair of utility lines in new or existing corridors within the Louisiana Coastal Zone. Issued January 28, 1997.

GP-15 Maintenance Dredging of Existing Navigation Channels and Slips.

Maintenance dredging of existing channels, canals, and ditches that are utilized for commercial purposes or private navigation. Issued January 28, 1997.

GP-16 Open Water Dredging of New Oil and Gas Channels, Canals, and Slips.

Construction of new channels, canals, and slips that are used for access to oil, gas, and salt water disposal wells and production facilities within the Coastal Zone of Louisiana and that are located in open water.

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Fields to Forested Wetlands

by Paul Clifton

The National Biological Survey estimates that forested wetland habitat in the Mississippi River Basin has dwindled from approximately 22 million pre-settlement acres to approximately five million acres. But through entrepreneurial initiative and cooperation among state and federal resource agencies, some of this acreage in Louisiana is being returned to its natural state - bottomland hardwood forests and cypress/tupelo swamps. These valuable habitats are being re-built by the creation of *mitigation areas.*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and, in the Louisiana Coastal Zone, DNR's Permits/Mitigation Section within the Coastal Management Division regulate activities that occur in wetlands. When wetlands are destroyed by permitted activities, permittees are required to provide compensatory mitigation to replace those wetlands. Compensatory mitigation is the replacement, substitution, enhancement, or protection of ecological values caused by a permitted activity. For user groups, areas on which to mitigate these damages are often difficult to find in south Louisiana. Equally difficult is the issue of establishment and maintenance of the mitigation site. Industry groups often do not have the resources and technical skills required to design, implement, and maintain mitigation projects. Under current federal regulations, a mitigation site for forested wetland habitat must be maintained *in perpetuity,* while under state regulations a fifty-year

Cont. on page 4

maintenance period is required. Understandably, most wetland user groups are adverse to bearing this kind of long-term financial responsibility. Establishment of mitigation areas provides a solution to this thorny issue.

A mitigation area is usually established on a tract of agricultural land, that with some physical manipulation, can be returned to a natural wetland state. Requirements for the area (referred to as the wetland trinity) are: hydric soils, wetland hydrology, and wetland vegetation. To restore wetland hydrology on a field, measures such as leveling out old crop rows and breaching levees to restore natural water movement are initiated. If water levels have to be manipulated to maintain wetland conditions, culverts or other water control structures may be installed. Once the field has been returned to its pre-agriculture contours and water regime, the next step is establishing wetland vegetation.

The mitigation area operator, who goes through a rigorous approval process and has entered into an agreement with state and federal agencies, may sell acreage to wetland users as compensatory mitigation. The operator agrees to re-vegetate the tract with wetland tree species, monitor growth and survival conditions, and most importantly, shoulder the maintenance responsibility for the area in perpetuity.

Stream Wetland Services of Lake Charles has become the largest owner/operator of mitigation areas in the state and currently maintains seven mitigation areas with a total area close to 3,200 acres. There are a number of challenges in the mitigation area business. “Finding the right piece of land, with the necessary physical attributes, namely soil type and wetland hydrology, is difficult,” says David Richard, Executive Vice President of Stream Property Management. Richard also explained that finding the right piece of land at the right price is equally difficult and predicting future mitigation needs is hard to do as well. Richard noted, “there is direct benefit for direct cost in using mitigation areas to replace lost wetlands. Money is not going into some big pot to be used later for a yet-to-be-designed, mitigation project. The results are real and the results are readily seen in mitigation areas.”

The advent of the mitigation area has become an important tool for state and federal resource agencies as well as industry to replace lost wetlands in south Louisiana. By use of this system, some abandoned agricultural fields, initially created on flood plains by chainsaw, pump and levee, are being returned to their natural wetland state.

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"T'was the Night After Christmas"

DNR's Christmas Tree Program: Demo Wins Awards for Teens

Two sophomores from Rosepine High School are actively educating audiences through their local Vernon Parish 4-H program with the cleverly written and entertaining "T'was The Night After Christmas" presentation. With rhyming lyrics and a series of posters, Loren Martin and Lena Lambert tell the tale of Louisiana's coastal erosion problem. As the well-rehearsed story continues, the students describe one of DNR's coastal restoration techniques, the Christmas tree brush fence, and how these fences function to restore and create marshes. While reciting statistics about DNR's Parish Coastal Wetlands Restoration Program (PCWRP, known as the Christmas Tree Program) and building specifications for the brush fences, Loren and Lena actually build a scaled-down replica of a brush fence right before the eyes of the audience, complete with string zig-zagging across the top of the fence to hold in the pine tree cuttings.

Lena Lambert (left) and Loren Martin (right) presenting "T'was the Night After Christmas" to 4-H members and supporters in Vernon Parish.

Loren Martin, 15-year old son of Eddie and Mitzi Martin, was inspired by a story reported in the *Louisiana Environmentalist* magazine which was written about Christmas trees being used to restore the state's coastal wetlands. He wanted to create a demonstration project on this topic for his local 4-H club, so Loren obtained detailed information from Coastal Restoration Division's (CRD) project manager Kenneth Bahlinger. Further information was obtained from the Louisiana Departments of Environmental Quality and Agriculture, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and several magazines, newspapers, and videos.

With the help of his parents, Loren researched the subject, designed and built the demonstration, and began presenting "T'was The Night After Christmas" at local and state 4-H competitions in 1995. One year later, his fellow 4-H club member, Lena Lambert, 15-year old daughter of Alton and Brenda Lambert, joined him in improving and presenting the demonstration. The demonstration has won a number of 1st and 2nd-place prizes at Vernon Parish 4-H competitions and 4th place at the state competition level. In addition, Loren was selected as a State Winner and earned a paid trip to Memphis to participate in the 1997 National 4-H Youth Congress along with an $800 Savings Bond.

The students have successfully

Cont. on page 6

Loren and Lena, standing near their scaled-down replica of a Christmas tree brush fence, answer questions after presenting their demonstration to CRD employees. Shown from left to right are: Rick Raynie, Kenneth Bahlinger, Annell Peek, Lena Lambert, Loren Martin, and Mitzi Martin.

educated a number of audiences with their demonstration under the guidance of Kem Villejoin, Vernon Parish 4-H Representative with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. This past August, the group traveled to Baton Rouge to present their demonstration to members of the Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Restoration Division. CRD experts and staff reported their performance to be entertaining, full of useful and important information, and presented in a very creative and enthusiastic way. CRD staff were all equally impressed at their motivation to design such an effective visual and verbal demonstration about Louisiana's coastal wetland loss and restoration.

During their visit to DNR, the 4-H group met with Kenneth Bahlinger to discuss ways that Vernon Parish citizens can join in efforts to protect the coast. As a result, Loren and Lena are now heading the Vernon Parish 4-H Teen Leader Club community service project which will coordinate with the Vernon Parish Cattleman's Association to collect discarded Christmas trees and transport them to the marshes in Cameron Parish.

DNR commends Loren, Lena, their parents, Kem, and all others involved in this 4-H project. A DNR salute to everyone participating in this unique coastal restoration effort.

PCWRP Accomplishments To Date For The 1997/1998 Season:

- The Parish Coastal Wetlands Restoration Program (PCWRP) is in its eighth consecutive year and is designed to protect, restore, and build new marshes through use of Christmas tree brush fences and planting marsh vegetation.
- The PCWRP is offered to the 19 coastal parishes every year and provides an average of $18,000 for implementation of brush fence and vegetation planting projects.
- 38,000 linear feet, or approximately 7 miles, of brush fences have been built at 27 locations throughout the coastal zone using over 710,000 discarded Christmas trees.
- After the 1996 holiday season, President Clinton donated 50 Christmas trees from the grounds of the White House which were placed into the Louisiana marshes.
- DNR/CRD has assisted several other states including New York, Maryland, Alabama, Texas, and California with input on brush fences and construction.

Remember to recycle your Christmas tree after the holiday season. This year, some 8,000 trees

Cont. on page 7

collected from East Baton Rouge Parish will be placed in the brush fences in St. Mary Parish marshes. Additional information on the PCWRP can be obtained from Kenneth Bahlinger at (504) 342-7362 or by calling your local parish government office.

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Office of Coastal Restoration and Management

Meet the Staff -- Part IV

The Database Analysis Section (DAS) of the Coastal Restoration Division (CRD) complements and supports all existing monitoring functions of the Biological Monitoring Section (BMS), provides technical assistance to other sections within the Division, and provides avenues of information exchange/ transfer to the general public and other state and federal agencies on past, present, and future CRD activities. The major functions of this section include Geographical Information System (GIS) and ORACLE database development, periodic review of data quality and data analysis activities, information exchange, data transfer, and public program awareness. Collectively, the BMS and DAS work effectively as integrated units to further enhance and maximize present monitoring procedures, protocols, and activities.

The DAS assists in statistical data analysis for all BMS project reports, is responsible for coordinating and disseminating information to state and federal agencies, provides technical and field support to three BMS field offices (Abbeville, Thibodaux, New Orleans), develops public presentation materials for CRD, and is responsible for the development of the GIS and the ORACLE databases.

The section currently has ten personnel with a total of fourteen positions, nine permanent positions and five one-year job appointments. Overseeing the section as a Natural Resources Geoscience Program Manager is Steve Underwood. Steve earned an Associate degree in Applied Science from Cape Fear Technical Institute in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1977, a B.S. degree in Marine Biology from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington in 1979, and earned a Master of Science degree from the Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences at LSU in 1995. He supervises the section's progress in the development of the Oracle and GIS databases, a myriad of support functions related to other sections of CRD, and coordinates various public outreach activities. Steve is married and enjoys indoor and outdoor sporting activities, flying, and scuba diving. He has worked at DNR for over seven years.

Rick Raynie is a Natural Resources Geoscience Program Supervisor. He earned a B.S. degree in 1987 from the University of Miami with a double major in Marine Science and Biology and a minor in Chemistry. Rick also earned a M.S. degree in Oceanography and Coastal Sciences from LSU in 1991. Rick's working group provides assistance to the three CRD field offices (Abbeville, Thibodaux, New Orleans) in data collection, management, and coastal restoration

Cont. on page 8

project evaluation; handles GIS and other data requests from CRD and outside entities; prepares informational materials for public distribution and displays; and handles ad hoc requests from the administration. Currently, his hobbies include restoring old homes, landscaping, and learning new skills. Rick has worked at DNR over five years.

William K. "Kirk" Rhinehart is a Natural Resources Program Supervisor. He earned his B.S. degree in Biology from Salisbury State University in Maryland in 1989 and his M.S. degree in Oceanography and Coastal Sciences from LSU in 1994. Kirk directs the GIS and Oracle (Biological Monitoring Database System) database development and management. He is married and enjoys fishing, hunting, scuba diving, and spear-fishing. Kirk has worked at DNR for three years.

Suzanne Beasley is a Natural Resources Geoscience Specialist. She earned a B.A. in Biology from Connecticut College and her M.S. degree in Oceanography and Coastal Sciences from the Wetland Biochemistry Institute at LSU. Suzanne provides GIS maps and graphics for CRD, technical and field assistance to all CRD field offices, produces public outreach materials, and delivers educational presentations. She is married and enjoys fishing, scuba diving, skiing, and Cajun dancing. Suzanne has worked at DNR for over two years.

Marieanne Hollay works in the section as the Biostatistician. She earned her B.S. degree in Agronomy from the University of Illinois at Urbana, her M.S. degree in Entomology from Purdue University, a M.S. degree in Applied Statistics from LSU, and her Ph.D. in Entomology from LSU. Her studies in Entomology focused on plant resistance to insects. She provides statistical support, project design, and data analysis and interpretation to the geoscientists located in the various field offices. Marieanne is active in the LSU Feral Cat Trap/Release Program, and is an avid promoter of the Louisiana Organic Growers Association, BREADA-Community Garden Project, and the East Baton Rouge Recycling Program. She has worked for the department about two months.

Craig Conzelmann works as a Natural Resources Geoscience Specialist. He earned a B.S. degree with a double major in Biology and Environmental Science from the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Craig's duties include coordinating with the USGS on acquiring and manipulating real-time data, database maintenance, and field office assistance. He relaxes

Cont. on page 9

CRD's Database Analysis Section staff: L-R, Shawn Miller, Marieanne Hollay, Rick Raynie, Steve Underwood, Kirk Rhinehart, Suzanne Beasley, Chris Cretini, and Craig Conzelmann. Not pictured: Michael Paul Gravois, Mark Lagarde.

by hunting, fishing, and doing anything outdoors. Craig has worked at DNR for one year.

Chris Cretini is a Natural Resources Geoscience Specialist. He earned his B.S. degree in Forest Management in December 1996. Chris provides support for dedication and groundbreaking ceremonies, assists other members of the Database Analysis Section including those in field offices, and performs various public outreach tasks. He enjoys spending time with his family and friends, as well as landscaping, gardening, and camping. Chris has worked at DNR for eight months.

Mark Lagarde is a Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Analyst. He earned his B.S. degree in Marine Biology from Nicholls State University in 1994. Mark is currently working on an oyster lease polygon spatial database using Arc Info and will create GIS maps as needed for CRD. Mark previously worked in the Thibodaux field office as a Geoscience Specialist. He has worked at DNR for almost two years.

Michael Paul Gravois is a Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Analyst. He earned his B.S. degree from LSU, and also spent time as a Research Assistant in Marine Geochemistry at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) and at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. Michael is presently working on an oyster lease polygon spatial database using Arc Info and creating GIS maps. He is married and enjoys biking, fishing, and boating.

In Memory: Michael Shawn Miller (4/11/69 - 12/2/97) lost his life in a tragic accident on December 2, 1997. Shawn served as a Natural Resources Geoscience Specialist in DAS since October 1997. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1993 from Western State College of Colorado, and was expected to receive a M.S. degree in Biology from Southeastern Louisiana University in 1998. We all lost a good friend and a very special person, and we will greatly miss him.

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Third Annual Coastal Stewardship Awards

Do you know someone who deserves recognition for his or her efforts on behalf of coastal Louisiana?

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana is now accepting nominations for the third annual Coastal Stewardship awards. These awards are given in recognition of outstanding contributions to restore and preserve Louisiana's coast.

Competition is limited to eight categories: Citizen Advocate (Adult), Citizen Advocate (Youth), Professional, Media, Educator, Organization, Distinguished Achievement, and Director.

Each nomination must contain a nomination form, a letter stating the nominee's specific contributions, and documentation of those contributions. All entries must be received by February 1, 1998.

For more information or for a nomination form, call Dina Boucher in Baton Rouge at (504) 344-6555 or toll free at 1-800-LA-COAST.

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Conservation Plan Gets Federal Approval

Just before the close of the year, state coastal leaders were able to mark yet another milestone for Louisiana's coastal program. This major achievement was the federal agencies' approval of the Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan developed to achieve no net loss of wetlands in the coastal areas of Louisiana as a result of future developmental activities.

Approval of the Plan by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service now reduces the state of Louisiana's cost-share for coastal wetlands restoration projects and also allows the state greater ability in funding state-only coastal restoration measures.

According to DNR Assistant Secretary for OCRM Katherine Vaughan, the Plan approval means a real enhancement in our coastal restoration efforts.

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This document was published by the Department of Natural Resources, P. O. Box 44487, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70804, to inform the public about Coastal Zone Management under authority of 16 U.S.C. 1451, et seq., and La. R.S. 49:214.21 et seq.
Financial assistance was provided by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, administered by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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